

Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY TAIPEI NIACT IMMEDIATE
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SUBJECT: ARTICLE ON F-2 SALES TO ROC

1. WASHINGTON STAR RAN FOLLOWING FRONT-PAGE STORY ON F-4 JET SALES IN JULY 1 EDITION (NYTIMES RAN SIMILAR STORY ON P.2 SAME DAY).
2. QUOTE: U.S. SCRAPS SALE OF F-4 JETS TO TAIWAN AIR FORCE BY RICHARD BURT. THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION, IN ANOTHER MOVE TO IMPROVE TIES WITH THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA, HAS SCRAPPED A PLAN TO SELL TAIWAN 60 F-4 FIGHTER-BOMBERS, OFFICIALS SAID YESTERDAY.

THE OFFICIALS, WHO SAID THE DECISION TO CANCEL THE PROPOSED DOLS 500 MILLION DEAL WAS TAKEN AT THE "HIGHEST LEVELS" LAST WEEK, DESCRIBED THE MOVE AS PART OF THE UNCLASSIFIED

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ADMINISTRATION'S NEW INTEREST IN STRENGTHENING RELATIONS WITH CHINA. THE SALE OF THE F-4 FIGHTERS TO TAIWAN, THEY SAID, WAS VIEWED BY WHITE HOUSE AND STATE DEPARTMENT OFFICIALS AS RUNNING COUNTER TO THE ADMINISTRATION'S DOCTRINE OF SUPPORTING A "STRONG AND SECURE" CHINA.

IN THE LAST MONTH, THE ADMINISTRATION HAS DROPPED ITS

OPPOSITION TO WESTERN EUROPEAN ARMS SALES TO PEKING AND

IT HAS ALSO RELAXED ITS OWN GUIDELINES ON THE EXPORT OF
ADVANCED NON-MILITARY EQUIPMENT.

THE DECISION TO SCRAP THE F-4 SALE TO TAIWAN IS SEEN BY
OFFICIALS AS A FURTHER SIGN THAT THE ADMINISTRATION IS
LAYING THE GROUNDWORK FOR POSSIBLY NORMALIZING RELATIONS
WITH PEKING NEXT YEAR.

TAIWAN HAS BEEN SEEKING THE 60 F-4 FIGHTERS FOR OVER THREE
YEARS, FEARING THAT ITS EXISTING AIR FORCES WOULD BECOME
OBSOLETE. UNTIL RECENTLY, OFFICIALS SAID, THE ADMINIS-
TRATION WAS TENTATIVELY PLANNING ON MEETING THIS REQUEST
AND THE PENTAGON WAS INSTRUCTED TO INCLUDE THE SALE OF
THE FIGHTERS IN ITS ARMS SALES PROGRAM FOR 1979.

THE ADMINISTRATION, THEY SAID, WAS ALSO MOVING TO PROVIDE
TAIWAN ADVANCED AIR-TO-GROUND MISSILES WHICH COULD BE
DEPLOYED ABOARD THE F-4.

HOWEVER, FOLLOWING NATIONAL SECURITY ADVISER ZBIGNIEW
BRZEZINSKI'S VISIT TO PEKING LAST MONTH, SENIOR OFFICIALS
ARE SAID TO HAVE TAKEN A SECOND LOOK AT THE PROPOSED
DEAL. IN PARTICULAR, THEY ARE SAID TO HAVE QUESTIONED
THE DESIRABILITY OF PROVIDING TAIWAN A WARPLANE CAPABLE
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OF UNDERTAKING BOMBING MISSIONS DEEP INTO CHINESE
TERRITORY.

ACCORDINGLY, AT A HIGH LEVEL MEETING LAST WEEK, BRZEZINSKI
AND OTHER SENIOR OFFICIALS ARE SAID TO HAVE REJECTED
THE F-4 DEAL ON THE GROUND IT WOULD INTRODUCE UNWANTED
COMPLICATIONS INTO THE PROCESS OF SINO-AMERICAN
NORMALIZATION.

WHILE THE F-4 DEAL HAS BEEN SCRAPPED, AN OFFICIAL DEEPLY
INVOLVED IN CHINA PLANNING STRESSED THAT THE ADMINISTRA-
TION IS STILL INTERESTED IN MAINTAINING THE EXISTING
MILITARY BALANCE ON "BOTH SIDES OF THE TAIWAN STRAITS."
END QUOTE.

3. DEPARTMENT HAS BEEN USING FOLLOWING PRESS GUIDANCE
IN RESPONSE TO INQUIRIES ON STORY. QUOTE: IN RESPONSE
TO EARLIER PRESS REPORTS ON THIS SUBJECT WE HAVE SAID
THAT THE ISSUE OF ARMS SALES TO TAIWAN IS UNDER HIGH
LEVEL REVIEW. THAT IS STILL THE CASE. WHEN DECISIONS
ARE MADE AND TRANSMITTED TO THE CONGRESS AS REQUIRED BY
LAW, THEY WILL BECOME PUBLIC. END QUOTE.
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